

rather than the mainframe accounting system **116**. As a result, the billing data from the billing repair cards may be entered directly into the billing verification system **100, 200**, and the billing exception records may be created directly in the database **108**. In addition, the repair agent optionally may upload the billing data from an electronic file directly to the billing verification system database **108**. The second simplification is that step **410**, transferring the billing exception records from the mainframe accounting system **116** to the database **108**, becomes unnecessary. In addition to these simplifications, transitioning completely to the billing verification system **100, 200** enables multiple customer employees, such as field representatives in remote locations, to review the billing data and identify disputed charges by accessing the billing verification system **100, 200**.

The method of verifying railcar repair charges will now be described from the repair agent's perspective with reference to **FIGS. 9-13**. After the billing verification system **100, 200** sends notification to the repair agent that the billing exception records are available, the repair agent accesses the billing verification system **100, 200** in step **902**. A repair agent graphical user interface presents the repair agent with a repair agent menu screen display **1000**, such as the example shown in **FIG. 10**. From this display **1000**, the repair agent may select billing exception records relating to a particular railcar owner and time period by clicking on the appropriate hypertext link. The billing verification system **100** of **FIG. 1** contains only one railcar owner's billing exception records. The billing verification system **200** of **FIG. 2**, however, may contain billing exceptions records for all railcar owners for which the repair agent performs repairs.

After the repair agent clicks one of the hypertext links relating to a particular railcar owner and a particular time period in the repair agent menu screen, the graphical user interface presents a billing exception record header screen display **1100**, an example of which is shown in **FIG. 11**. A header area **1102** of the display **1100** displays information such as the bill number, a control number field **1104**, account date, received date, total bill amount, total exception amount, and total CBA amount. A search area **1106** provides

options for selecting billing exception records that correspond to certain criteria, such as car number, exception amount, and repair location (SPLC). When the repair agent clicks on the "SEARCH" button **1108**, the graphical user interface displays the first billing exception response screen display **1200**, an example of which is shown in **FIG. 12**.

A header area **1202** of the display **1200** shows, among other things, the railcar number, the date of repair, and the location at which the car was repaired. A billing exception area **1204** of the display **1200** shows a line item description of the exception. The exception line item begins with an exception line number that references the repair line number associated with the repair line item on the original billing repair card to which an exception is taken. The display **1200** also includes a repair agent response area **1206** in which the repair agent may select a response to the exception. Preferably, the repair agent is presented with three possible responses. The repair agent may allow the exception, disallow the exception, or partially allow the exception. If the exception is partially allowed, the repair agent must designate a partially allowed exception amount. The repair header area **1202**, billing exception area **1204**, and repair agent response area **1206** preferably are formatted in a manner that complies with the AAR Interchange Rules governing billing repair cards.

Also within the response area **1206**, the repair agent may include comments supporting or explaining the response (step **906** of the method illustrated in **FIG. 9**). This is accomplished by clicking on the "COMMENTS" hypertext link, which causes the graphical user interface to display a response comments box **1302**, and example of which is shown in the comments screen display **1300** of **FIG. 13**. The comments are added to the "COMMENTS" field in the response area **1206** of **FIG. 12** after the repair agent clicks the "ADD" button **1304** in the response comments box **1302**. The repair agent optionally may attach supporting documentation in step **908** in a manner similar to that in which the railcar owner attaches supporting documentation as described above.

The billing verification system **100, 200** may accommodate varying levels of review by different representatives of the repair agent. This is particularly useful because field representatives of the repair agent may need to be consulted to confirm certain information related to repairs that were performed in the field. The level of review for different repair agent representatives is governed by the authentication and access control procedure. For instance, a repair agent manager and various repair agent field representatives may be granted different authentication credentials, such as usernames and passwords. Based on these credentials, the authentication and access control procedure preferably grants the manager access to all billing exception records relating to the repair agent. The field representatives, however, are preferably only granted access to those billing exception records that relate to their particular field repair facility or category of appropriate repair. In this case, the manager may notify each field representative when the billing exception records are available for their review. The field representatives then notify the manager when they have completed their review. Alternatively, the billing verification system **100, 200** may generate the appropriate notification messages. Once a field representative has completed review of billing exceptions and prepared the appropriate responses, those billing exception records may become inaccessible to the field representative, although the repair agent manager still may access them. At any time, the manager may review the status of pending billing exceptions according to various categories, such as completed responses, field-completed responses, and in-process responses. For instance, the manager may review an exception processing status report screen display **1400**, an example of which is shown in **FIG. 14**, by clicking the "STATUS RPT" button on the exception record header screen display **1100** of **FIG. 11**. The display **1400** includes a processing summary area **1402** that indicates how many of the exceptions for each location (SPLC) have been completed, how many have been field-completed, and how many are currently in-process. The summary area **1402** also includes information regarding the dollar amounts of the exceptions that have been allowed,